

A TOUR OF  
THE OLD  
(1871)

*George McDougall Church*



The First Protestant Church in Alberta

EDITED BY  
REV. R. E. FINLAY  
EDMONTON - ALBERTA

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# A Tour Through The Old George McDougall Church

Edited by

REV. R. E. FINLAY, Edmonton, Alberta

"There will be a great city here some day," is said to have been the remark of Rev. George McDougall to his son John as they neared the brow of McDougall Hill overlooking the river valley. There was then no public building outside the Hudson Bay fort that then stood on a bench of the north bank of the Saskatchewan about three-fourths of a mile to the southeast. The McDougalls decided to put up a log church here on the brow of the hill; it was erected by Rev. George McDougall and a band of his Indians in the summer of 1871. It is peculiar in construction in that it has upright logs between the windows, in the corners, and over the front door. There was a gallery in the church at one time, with a little stairway leading up from the front door to the left: it accommodated about 25 to 30 people. These are the original logs as you see them, and the interior of the roof is the same as it was when erected. The exterior siding was removed in order to re-chink and re-plaster the logs. The nails used in the siding had been made by hand by a blacksmith at Fort Saskatchewan, and cost one dollar a pound. They were the old-fashioned kind with square corners, and tapered to a point. The siding was replaced as formerly, running up and down, not horizontally.

It is of interest to know how this project was begun. The minutes state that "At a meeting of Presbytery held in All People's Mission on May 6, 1943, R. E. Finlay urged upon Presbytery the advisability of taking action to save this Old Historic Building, erected under the supervision of Rev. George McDougall and now settling into decay by the alley back of Alberta College. We believe posterity would regard us as lax and indifferent if we neglected this opportunity to conserve the building for future generations. To do this we would be giving tangible expression to noble and worthy pioneers, whose devotion and courage built for us this first church in Edmonton."

The suggestion was received and favorably commented upon. It was moved and seconded that the chairman, Rev. A. F. Marsh, nominate a committee and Presbytery agreed; the committee comprised Rev. F. S. McCall, R. E. Finlay, J. T. Stephens, Dr. A. K. McMinn, and Rev. J. P. Berry, with

power to add to the committee. Later P. E. Butchart, Dr. W. C. Whiteside, Geo. Cooper and Dr. Chas. H. Huestis were added to the Committee.

This was the Committee that assumed obligations to save the Old Church from oblivion. The two lower logs had rotted and were replaced. New shingles were needed for the roof, a new floor, new seats modelled after the old seats, and new windows. Money had to be provided, and the church moved to its present site and renovated. We did not appeal directly to the churches for funds, but the department stores, the packing plants and several industries helped us very materially, then a number of individuals donated generously, both clerical and lay. About \$6,000 was raised for renovation. Since then our expenses have been met by the offerings received through the contribution boxes and the five dollar wedding fees received for use of Old George McDougall Memorial Church. It has been a popular place for weddings; 115 weddings have been solemnized in the Old Church since renovation to the end of 1952. The pulpit and the pulpit chairs were the gift of Rev. Dr. Huestis, who was pastor of the Church during the years 1903-07. The chairs are of the 12th Century design and made without any metal bolt or screw, yet they are firm and substantial.

It was the design of the Committee to make the Church a shrine, a place of worship and a museum, hence the pictures that you see on the walls "tie in" mainly with the early history of the church.

We have in this first panel to our left, as we enter, a picture of Mrs. George McDougall, who was the first white woman to live in Alberta—a noble character, her picture reminds one very much of "Whistler's Mother." There is her son, John, to her right, and on the far side another son, David McDougall. In the center we have a picture of the Methodist parsonage in Edmonton. It stood out to the north-east, just about where the Memorial Hall now stands. These are Mrs. McDougall's three daughters—Mrs. Harrison Young, Mrs. Richard Hardisty and Mrs. Leslie Wood. These were their husbands—Leslie Wood, Senator Hardisty, and Harrison Young. This young lady is the first white child born in Alberta, the daughter of Senator Hardisty. David McDougall was a trader with the Indians, and his headquarters were

latterly at Morley, west of Calgary, where John built a mission in 1874.

The next panel is largely taken up with the pastors of the church in its early days. The church was built in 1871, and George McDougall was the pastor of the church for four years, to 1875. Henry M. Manning came next, 1875-78; then John Walton, 1878-79, and Arthur Whiteside, 1879-80, whose son, Dr. W. C. Whiteside, is a noted doctor in the city. Rev. Whiteside came here in 1879 and the records show that he was asked to go and take charge of a new mission, to be opened, at Prince Albert in 1880. In the summer of 1880 he left by riverboat, a sternwheeler called "The Lily", for Prince Albert. He arrived on August 21, 1880. There was at that time no parsonage or church for him to occupy and he worked hard in helping to get out logs to erect both a home and a church. He chinked the logs in both church and parsonage and whitewashed them and on Christmas Day, 1881, the church was ready for occupancy and the Rev. Arthur Whiteside dedicated the church that day. That was the first Methodist Church built in the province of Saskatchewan.

Reverend George Hannah came here to Edmonton in 1893. The people were delighted at his coming. However, he was here less than a year when, in the course of making some improvements around the outside of the church, he caught cold which developed into pneumonia, and he died May 22, 1894. Next was Reverend George W. Dean, who came in 1895 and was here until 1896. Of interest elsewhere in the building is a picture of McDougall Church choir in 1895, during the time Reverend Dean was serving the church. Then came Joshua Dyke, B.D., who served McDougall Church during the years 1896-98. He preached in a new frame church, the old church being placed in the rear, as it is in the picture on the wall. He was followed by Dr. T. C. Buchanan who was here from 1898 until 1903. Dr. Charles Huestis, 1903-07, is shown next. All these men have passed on.

Here is a prominent layman of McDougall Church, to whom the church owes a great deal—P. E. Butchart, secretary of the Board of McDougall Church for many years. Here are some other men prominent while McDougall was here, notably Reverend Thomas Woolsey. He served in the area during the period 1855-65, but during these ten years he was only a visitor at Edmonton as there was no organized church there.

He was a nomadic missionary with the Indians, following them from camp to camp, and living with them for seven of the ten years. He was the last of the nomadic missionaries who did not build but went with the Indians. The first real builder was George McDougall.

There was no one here from 1848-55, except that the Edmonton Fort was visited periodically by Henry Steinhauer and Thomas Woolsey who preached at the Fort during their visits.

Here is Reverend Steinhauer, about whom there is a very interesting story. He was a little Indian boy in a camp of Ojibway Indians in Ontario. The Ojibways were basket makers. Elder Case, presiding Elder of the Methodist church, was asked by a Philadelphia merchant to select a little boy and he would educate him, give him his name, and send him west as a missionary. So it came about that Mr. Steinhauer, a Philadelphia merchant who had recently lost a son, who was studying for the ministry, adopted this little Indian boy who had only a nickname. So Henry Steinhauer was educated in preparation for missionary work. He was associated with Reverend James Evans in the printing of the Cree syllabic literature, then took a mission field at Lac La Biche from 1855-59. During the period 1869-72, he was at Whitefish Lake assisting in the translation of the Bible into the Cree syllabic language.

This Cree syllabic translation was the invention of Rev. James Evans who came to Norway House as a missionary in 1840. He discovered that the Cree language could be expressed by 64 symbols representing the syllables of the language. He selected these symbols, and made type from the lead taken from the Hudson's Bay tea chests; for ink he used chimney soot and water. What was he to do for paper? He sent the boys and girls out to gather bark from the white birch. For a press, he used the Hudson's Bay fur press. He taught the young people and boys and girls of the Crees this newly printed language; the Lord's Prayer, and the Beatitudes and some hymns were the first parts printed. There were young people who learned to read in about three weeks' time. They called it "Birch Bark Talk."

Here we have a picture of the father and his two sons, who became missionaries as well—Robert and Edgerton. He sent them to Victoria University. His oldest daughter married John McDougall. She was his first wife.

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This is an interesting picture; this is John McDougall and Robert Steinhauer, and three Indian chiefs. The names of the chiefs are Chief Sampson, Chief Pakan, and Chief Jonas Big Stony. These three chiefs accompanied by Reverend Robert Steinhauer and John McDougall made a visit to Great Britain. While overseas, they visited Methodist churches and created a great sensation. They were much in demand for missionary meetings, spoke in many places, wore their regalia on most occasions, and made a very favorable impression. The social highlight of their trip came when they were entertained by Queen Victoria.

This picture shows the church that stood on the corner before the present-day big church was erected, so today's church is the third such building that has stood on that site.

It was Reverend J. P. Berry's idea that we ask denominations that have held services in this old church to furnish us with three pictures. The Salvation Army ladies held services in the building in the late 80's, the Moravian missionaries also held several services here. They sent us pictures of Reverend Schwartz, Reverend Henkleman and his wife, Reverend Schotschneider, and Reverend Clement Hoyler. Reverend Hoyler has left us a very fine record; he signed in the guest book, and stated how grateful he was to the Methodists for allowing him to use this church for services and what a friendly spirit he found here. He was the first Canadian to be made a bishop of the Moravian Church in America. Then we have Father Lacombe of the R.C. Church who arrived in 1848 and became one of the most successful R.C. missionaries.

The Anglicans sent us pictures of Canon Newton, Bishop John McLean, and Bishop H. A. Gray. On one of the other panels you will find a picture of the log building known as Canon Newton's Hermitage, which was located north of the Clover Bar C.N.R. bridge, and north-east. It is commemorated by the Anglicans, who have erected a cairn to mark this site.

Now we come to the founders of Methodist mission work in the West—Reverend Robert Rundle, whose picture we have given a prominent place at the front of the church behind the pulpit. Mt. Rundle at Banff was named for him. He was a nomadic missionary—he did not put up any buildings at all in the eight years he was here, but roamed about with the Indians, mostly the Crees and the Stonies. He came in 1840 and returned to England in 1848.



We also have a prominent place for George McDougall and his noble wife. George McDougall who came in 1863 and family in 1864 put in most of his ministry at Victoria, now called Pagan. He built a mission house and a school at Pagan that was eminently successful among the Crees. He came with his son to Edmonton in 1871 and selected a plot on which McDougall Church and Alberta College are erected. He was supposed to have received one quarter section, but for some unknown reason he was crowded into a corner of the section.

They gathered the Indians together and put up a log church, George McDougall being in charge for four years 1871-75. In 1874 George McDougall visited the Stoneys at what is now Morley, west of Calgary; they were noted for periodic trips into the vicinity of Banff, and hunting expeditions. He went with them up the Bow, as Robert Rundle had done several times years earlier, and as the Stoneys were anxious for him to establish a mission, it was decided to locate one at Morley. A church was built there in 1874, with John being left in charge.

In 1876 George McDougall was visiting Morley. They were nearly out of meat, and George suggested a buffalo hunt. They had heard that there were buffalo available northeast of Calgary, so went there. The hunt was successful. They had slain five buffaloes and night was coming on. George McDougall suggested to his son that he would go on ahead and get the fire going at the camp that they had established in some brush near the Bow, while the son would load the meat on a sleigh and bring it at a more leisurely pace. A storm arose and although the son, the horses and the sleigh reached the camp, the father did not come. All night they awaited his arrival, but he did not come. In the morning they made a search for him. They looked for him for three days, then secured help from Calgary, and found him thirteen days after he had left them to go to camp. He was found lying on the prairie with his hands peacefully folded over his bosom. Thus ended a remarkable life, a life that probably would have been good for another ten or fifteen years were it not for his untimely end. The date was January 23, 1876.

Now we come to the Presbyterian group—Dr. Andrew Baird, Dr. D. G. McQueen, and Mrs. McQueen. Andrew Baird was the first Presbyterian missionary to come to Edmonton. He came by buckboard from Winnipeg to Edmonton, much of

the way alone, in 1887. He was followed by Rev. George D. McQueen. Above them we have two noted missionary superintendents, Reverend James Robertson, D.D., missionary to the Presbyterian Church, and Reverend James Woodsworth, D.D., of the Methodist Church. We have also a picture of Reverend James Fraser Smith, who rendered forty years' service in China as a medical missionary.

The Baptist panel includes Reverend Alex McDonald. He was the first Baptist missionary to serve in Edmonton, and there was associated with him a few years later Reverend Abraham Hager who was the first German Baptist minister. We have two prominent members of the Baptist Church—Robert Ritchie and Mrs. L. J. Bellamy. She was the mother of the first Rhodes scholar chosen for Alberta, Ralph Bellamy.

The next panel contains pictures of early Edmonton scenes, and government officials. First we have Premier Rutherford, first Premier of Alberta, and Frank Oliver, a prominent citizen who became Minister of the Interior in the Dominion Government at Ottawa. These officials are accompanied by pictures of the inauguration of the Province of Alberta. Also there is a picture of the old and the new seat of government on the site of Old Fort Edmonton. Above is a picture donated to us by the Hudson's Bay Company, showing an Indian scouting party looking up on the Old Fort from the spot which now marks the north end of the 105th Street Bridge. Although it is a painting, it is supposedly quite authentic and true in detail.

There is also a picture of the 101st "lift". It was used mostly for hauling coal up to the street level from the valley. Then there is a picture of Jasper Avenue in the early days. It presents quite a contrast to the bustling Jasper Avenue that we are familiar with today.

Here we have a picture of the first Edmonton school which, incidentally, was opened in 1881, and a picture of Miss M. Osborne who was, if not the first, then one of the earliest, school teachers in Edmonton. We have several prominent citizens—John Walters, noted lumberman and sawmill operator; Malcolm Groat, one of the first guarantors of the public school; and James Martin who taught school in Edmonton during the years 1886-90.

Of interest, also, are two pictures of early Hudson's Bay factors—one, John Rowand, who was the first chief factor after the union of the Northwest Fur Company with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821. The other factor is John E. Herriot, who was an early trader at Old Fort Edmonton, 1854. Three more prominent citizens whose pictures appear on the walls here are W. S. Robertson, Matthew McCauley, first mayor of the town of Edmonton in 1892, and Donald Ross, a noted character operating the first hotel in Edmonton. We also have pictures of Major Stiff, captain of the Home Guard during the Riel Rebellion of 1885; K. W. McKenzie, first mayor of the City of Edmonton, and W. T. Henry, who served the city in many ways and was twice its mayor.

Over here, there is a corner devoted to Alberta College. Among these pictures there is one of the College with its first principal, Dr. J. H. Riddell; one of its second principal, Dr. F. S. McCall, and a picture of the first class at Alberta College, 1904. Also, there is a picture of the present McCall Hall on 100th Avenue.

Besides the pictures, other tokens of the past have been gathered in this Memorial church. There is a showcase with a collection of vessels used in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. There are several individual cups and a couple of tankards.

There is an old copper kettle used by a party coming from Winnipeg across the prairies, and there is a trophy presented by Mrs. Senator Hardisty to the first curling club that played on the ice below what is now the Macdonald Hotel. There is also the Ordination Bible of the Reverend George McDougall which was presented to him on the occasion of his ordination in 1854. Here we have an Indian scalping instrument which a farmer plowed up in an Indian battlefield near Clive, with an early Indian gun. Of interest too is a knife for scraping buffalo hides, as well as an instrument called an Indian food grinder, the latter found at Swan Lake in the Peace River district. Reflecting the harshness of those early days is an Indian bludgeon.

There is a Cree syllabic Bible, a Cree hymn book, and a bust of Dr. Morley Puncheon, after whom Morley was named. There are also the gavels of the Methodist Church and the

Presbyterian Church, before union. One of the most interesting items in the showcase is a document of the first United Church Council, entitled, "Subscription to the Basis of Union by the Members of the First General Council of the United Church."

So ends our tour of the Old George McDougall Memorial Church, a tour which has taken us back into the early days of Edmonton and the early days of the church.

This church is maintained through your donations.